

REMARKS

Upon entry of the claim amendments listed above claims 2 and 7-11 will be pending in the present application. Claims 2 and 6-11 stand rejected. Claims 2, 7, 8, 9 and 11 are herein amended. Claim 6 is herein cancelled. No new matter has been entered. It is respectfully submitted that this paper is fully responsive to the Office Action mailed October 12, 2011 for the present application.

Allowable Subject Matter:

Applicants thank the examiner for considering the features of dependent claim 11 to be allowable. Applicants have amended claim 11 to be an independent claim by incorporating all of the features of former independent claim 6.

As such, applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 11 is in condition for allowance. Further, applicants have amended the dependent claims to depend from independent claim 11. As such, applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance and ask the examiner to take such action at the earliest possible date.

Claim Objections

The claims stand objected to because they include reference characters which are not enclosed within parenthesis. Specifically, the character “n” (claim 6) must be enclosed in parentheses.

Applicants have amended this feature (now in independent claim 11), as suggested by the examiner and consequently ask that the objection be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 2 and 6-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

The examiner contends that the phrase “the ball return passage” in claim 6 lacks antecedent basis. Applicants have amended this feature (now in independent claim 11), as suggested by the examiner and consequently ask that the rejection be withdrawn.

On the Merits

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 2 and 6-10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 09-229064 to *Honma* in view of JP 06-241228 to *Komata*.

Claim 11 has been amended to be in independent form. Claim 11 contains subject matter that the examiner indicated was allowable in the office action dated October 12, 2011. As such,

applicants submit that claim 11, and each of its dependent claims are in condition for allowance. Applicants ask that such action be taken at the earliest possible date.

In view of the foregoing amendments and accompanying remarks, it is submitted that all pending claims are in condition for allowance. A prompt and favorable reconsideration of the rejection and an indication of allowability of all pending claims are earnestly solicited.

If the Examiner believes that there are issues remaining to be resolved in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite and complete prosecution of this case.

If this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,
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